

# Exploring the Lore

Eruption Edition

By Talon

# Introduction

The majority of the Jedi Philosophy is drawn from just a few pieces of media. We tend to draw from the movies, from the Jedi Path book, and some role playing guides that introduced the Jedi Codes. Beyond that; each of the orders have their own document that outlines their approach to the Jedi Philosophy; The Jedi Compass, The Jedi Circle, The 21 Maxims, The 16 Teachings and so on. These serve as the core documents of the Jedi Philosophy.

These are core to the Jedi Philosophy because of their ease of use. It's so much easier to read the Jedi Rules of Behavior from the Jedi Path book and be told point blank "Self-discipline was one of the key concepts of Jedi behavior..." It's not hard to deduce that to be a Jedi requires self-discipline. The novels, comics, games and television shows are like a mythology where we see the Jedi Philosophy acted out, rather than directly told to us and so it can be a little more difficult to discern. When we can zoom in on things from the fiction that the Jedi say or do; we then have to take the time to analyze it and judge whether or not it is something that can translate well into reality. That takes time and effort and it's just not as fun as just reading the novels, playing the games, and watching the television shows for entertainment sake alone.

In addition, there are Jedi that only engage with a limited portion of the Star Wars media. For the longest time I only paid attention to the movies and to the novels. I've never had much of an interest in comic books in general, the style of the animation for the Clone Wars and Rebels was off-putting to me, and I'm not a role player. There are some Jedi that don't even like Star Wars or science fiction in general and are only Jedi because they like how the Philosophy is used for self-development purposes. So the philosophy that can be learned from those sources is lost to us, unless it's introduced in a different format.

That is the purpose of Exploring the Lore; to provide ease of access to the philosophy so that we can get a more nuanced and developed look at what the philosophy can be instead of relying solely on the core sources.

This edition pulls from the short story "Eruption", written by John Ostrander for Star Wars Insider 141. The protagonists are Je'daii, which is pre-Jedi. So the philosophy isn't Jedi, but since the Je'daii evolved into the Jedi, it bears exploring.

I pulled several excerpts from the story that I thought were worth looking at. Each excerpt is followed by my own personal analysis of its usefulness for Jediists, but I am a limited being and may have missed something and have different views about certain things, so I encourage you to do your own analysis.

# Analysis

For your analysis, I recommend using Jedi Opie Macleod's APBP Test.

Before getting into the APBP test, I'd like to introduce the concepts of exegesis and eisegesis.

Exegesis is the careful analysis of media with the purpose of exploring and interpreting what the author is trying to convey. This can include the exploration of context, themes, and symbolism. The primary purpose of exegesis is to understand the author's intent.

Eisegesis is the interpretation of media with the purpose of imposing the reader's opinion, agenda or bias into the interpretation.

This is an important distinction. It's easy and sometimes tempting to twist what a writer was trying to say in order to make it conform to a preexisting philosophical ideal that we hold. Eisegesis isn't necessarily wrong, but we have to be sure that the meaning that we impose on the media complements the rest of the Jedi Philosophy.

Example:

"The lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi ... you are a Jedi." - Master Thon

Exegesis; Master Thon was trying to convince Nomi Sunrider to use a lightsaber. If she is a Jedi, then she needs to use a lightsaber.

Eisegesis; Living Crystal uses the lightsaber as a metaphor for life. That a well constructed life (lightsaber) is the weapon that a Jedi uses to defend light and life. It's certainly not how the writer intended that quote to be used and so we shouldn't use my interpretation, my metaphor, as a core piece of the Jedi Philosophy.

Now, on to the APBP! It stands for Applicable, Practical, Beneficial, and Positive.

## **Applicable**

In my Exploring the Lore series I'll mainly be directly quoting Star Wars media. In analyzing that quote, we ask ourselves "Is the quote applicable to the real world?"

Example 1: "The lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi ... you are a Jedi" - Master Thon

Is this applicable to the real world? Well, Lightsabers aren't real. So, if we're dealing with strict exegesis, then it's not really applicable. If we engage in eisegesis and have the lightsaber serve as a metaphor or symbol for something else, that does make it applicable.

Example 2: "A Jedi can never hesitate to respond to the call of duty." - Nomi Sunrider

Is this applicable to the real world? Absolutely, most people have duties to attend to.

## **Practical**

"Is the quote practical?"

Example 1: Lightsabers

Is it practical to say that a lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi? Since lightsabers don't exist in the real world, that's not practical. Even if we engaged in eisegesis and said that the lightsaber could just represent any kind of sword; is it practical to believe that a Jedi should carry a sword everywhere they go as the fictional ones carried lightsabers? Probably not. However, if the lightsaber is a metaphor, as I use for Living Crystal, it can be practical.

Example 2: Duty

Is it practical to say that a Jedi shouldn't hesitate to fulfill their duties? Yes. If a Jedi is a parent and has a duty to care for their child, it's practical to say that they shouldn't hesitate to step up and provide that care.

## **Beneficial**

“Will it be beneficial to apply the quote to my life?”

### **Example 1: Lightsabers**

Would it be beneficial to say that a lightsaber is the weapon of a real Jedi? Again, since they don't exist, probably not. If the lightsaber represents a sword, then we could say that learning to use a sword would bring a variety of positive benefits, even if it's not particularly practical.

### **Example 2: Duty**

Would it be beneficial to be quick to attend to one's duties? I believe so. I find that I'm happier if I attend to my duties quickly, that way I can focus my free time on relaxing rather than ruminating over the duty.

## **Positive**

The last question we ask is “Does the application of the quote provide positive value to you and those around you?”

### **Example 1: Lightsaber**

Does saying that a lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi add value to you and those around you? Lightsabers don't exist. Pretending that one does or insisting that because you're a Jedi that you should carry a sword with you everywhere is probably going to do a lot more harm than good.

### **Example 2: Duty**

Does quickly fulfilling your duties provide something positive to you and to your family, friends and peers? I would say that it speaks well to your personal character and would be valued by those that you are responsible for.

These are only simple approaches; there are so many different angles that you can look at the philosophy from. Have fun with it and see what you can come up with.

## Excerpt One

*Lanoree was finding it difficult to maintain balance between the light and the dark sides of the Force as she was taught.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

The Je'Daii Order taught that a force user should maintain a delicate balance between the Ashla, the Light side of the Force, and the Bogan, the Dark Side of the Force. If a Je'Daii were to lean too far in one direction or the other, they would be exiled for a period of time to one of the moons of Tython, also named Ashla and Bogan, until they were able to once again embrace Bendu, the balance between Light and Dark.

If my understanding is correct, this philosophical approach to the Force began as a physical requirement for life to flourish on Tython. The world itself was attuned to the force and if people began to lean too far one way or the other, the world would be shaken with earthquakes and storms.

We don't live on Tython. We don't experience the supernatural in the same way that the Je'Daii or even the Jedi of fiction experience it. We have no need to perfectly balance the light and dark within us.

I believe that most attempts by people who claim to pursue a balanced path; especially those that consider themselves to be 'Gray Jedi' are using the fiction to justify behavior that they know is wrong.

A Jedi does all that they can to serve the light completely and this is the true balance.

Look at the world you live in. As people pursue their own interests they fall into conflict with those that appear to oppose those interests. People rush to acquire more wealth and power, often taking advantage of others so that they can acquire more faster. Earth is full of beauty, goodness, light and life; but it's often overwhelmed by darkness.

According to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, people are highly likely to leave a negative review if they have a bad experience with a company. They will tell around 10 to 15 people of their negative experience. On the flip side, only 10% of people are willing to leave a good review when they have a positive experience with a company. So, it takes approximately 40 positive experiences to make up for one negative review.

That's a business example; but just pay attention to any source of news. Good isn't reported unless it is extremely good because it takes a much higher threshold to make something good news worthy.

Being inundated with the negative spreads negativity. Stories about certain types of injustice gain more attention than others. Since there is limited time to report the news, the media will cherry pick instances that get the most attention and serve their agenda. So 9 out of 10 certain types of stories will get reported on while only 1 in 10 instances of a different type of story will be reported. This imbalance will give a feel that story type A is far more prevalent than story type B. This shifts people's perspectives about the story and they act accordingly.

What type of behavior have you seen people justify just because of what they've seen on the media source they choose to watch the most?

We all do this in our daily conversations, too. We all have an agenda. We have positions that we promote and there are attitudes and behaviors that we hope to steer people away from.

Even in writing this, I have an agenda to promote. One is that there are good lessons that can be learned from lore. Another is that we need to be mindful of what we're influenced by. If you look, you can probably find a lot more that even I am not aware of.

The point is that darkness spreads a lot faster than the light; so we need to dedicate ourselves to serving the light just to create balance in the world.

This is also the case internally. We all struggle with doubts, fears, anger, sadness, and unhealthy desires and addictions. I'm not saying that those things are necessarily evil, but they are destructive. The last line of the Jedi Code is 'There is no death; there is the Force.' In the High Republic series, the Jedi have a rallying

cry 'For Light and Life!' These are directly connected. There is no darkness/death; there is light/life.

Follow the path of doubt, fear, anger, sadness and unhealthy desires and you will find darkness and death. It's not that they are evil, it's just that if followed, they bring darkness, destruction and ruin.

It's good to have doubt, fear, anger and desire when they are treated properly. Doubt should give way to discovery. Fear should give way to calm. Anger should give way to justice. Desire should give way to happiness. Unfortunately, we find it hard to deal with these emotions in a positive manner and instead they become a lens through which we see the world.

A Jedi will spend their lifetime meditating on these lenses in an attempt to cleanse the darkness from them. This is done through exploring our inner being and finding appropriate ways to handle our doubts, fears, angers and desires; putting them to positive use. Yet we understand that even as they are cleared, new ones will form, unawares, that they will have to contend with at a later time.

We're so completely imbalanced that only a complete commitment to the light will move us toward balance.

## Your Analysis

For each of these excerpts; use Jedi Opie MacLeod's APBP test to determine for yourself whether it adds value to your understanding of the Jedi Philosophy.

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

How do you experience the Force?

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What does it mean for a Jediist to seek balance?

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What does it mean to be a Gray Jedi?

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Watch your conversations for a while:

What agendas do you tend to promote?

What agenda do other people promote to you?

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## Excerpt Two

*Sometimes the best way to cut off violence was to use it first.*

- Lanoree Brock, Eruption, John Ostrander

Cutting off violence by being violent is what is known as a pre-emptive strike. There are many people that might get quite idealistic and say that Jedi should never be the first to attack. After all, “a Jedi uses their power to defend and protect, never to attack others.” To get blunt, that’s just foolish. We live in an era of guns and we don’t have access to the force in the same way the Jedi of fiction do. We can’t use swords to deflect bullets nor do we have super reflexes that allow us to dodge shots fired at us with ease. If someone points a gun at you, you are a fool if you feel that you must allow them to shoot at you before you are ethically allowed to defend yourself.

Thankfully this is just fanciful philosophizing. The majority of Jedi will never have to make the decision to pre-empt an attack with violence. The Jedi or Je’daii would have to philosophize about that because part of their mission was to be peacekeepers and actively protect and defend others. We are not. Only those that serve in a peacekeeping role as part of their job have to worry about that.

That begs the question; is this quote practical to Jedi civilians who will hopefully go their whole lives without having to worry about being in a life-threatening conflict?

I believe so. There are many places in our lives where we can and should pre-empt conflict.

A Jedi should have a will and last testament. Upon our deaths, this serves to preempt conflict over the distribution of our possessions.

A Jedi should keep a well maintained stock of food, water, medical supplies and other provisions so that in the case of a disaster they will have pre-empted the decision and internal conflict over whether or not they have to risk going out into a worsening situation.

A Jedi should make sure they are up to date on their vaccinations. A vaccine is a pre-emptive strike against the possibility of a future infection.

A Jedi should strive for transparency in their leadership decisions. By being transparent about how they make their decisions they pre-empt the impacts of criticism. Everyone is perfectly clear about why the Jedi made the decision and so attempts to criticize and ostracize the Jedi will be impotent because trust has been established.

This quote is practical as it is for those that work in law enforcement or the military who may have to make a decision about whether or not to use a pre-emptive attack, and by thinking a little bit outside of the box we can see how it can be used in a practical manner by the rest of us on a regular basis.

## **Your Analysis**

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

Do you believe that it is ethical to strike first?

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The fictional Jedi were considered warriors; should real Jedi also be a warrior culture and seek roles where they are active in law enforcement or military?

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What ways, outside of the realm of combat, should Jedi seek to strike first?

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How much of your Jedi training is made up of fanciful pursuits; training and philosophizing for situations that you won't ever face? (Sometimes it's fun to do so, but we must be mindful of it.)

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## Excerpt Three

*If there's one thing Lanoree learned through her experience, it was to listen to her instincts.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

The world was first exposed to a Jedi saying to trust your instinct on the Millenium Falcon when Luke Skywalker first began training with his lightsaber. Obi-Wan Kenobi placed a helmet on Luke's head with the visor down so that he wasn't able to see, telling him to "Let go your conscious self and act on instinct."

Qui-Gon Jinn provides a young Anakin Skywalker similar advice before the podrace in Phantom Menace. "Remember, concentrate on the moment. Feel, don't think. Use your instincts."

Trusting your instincts is certainly part of the fictional Jedi Philosophy. The purpose is to get the Jedi out of their own head and relying on their own reasoning and allow the Force the opportunity to work through them.

Like Yoda and lightsabers, the Force, as it exists in fiction, isn't real. We use it as a generic term to indicate that the Jedi seek to develop themselves spiritually, but there is no all encompassing power that allows us to lift stones with our minds or shoot lightning from our fingertips. Okay, there is a fringe element of Jediism that believes that sort of thing is possible, but only a few. We don't all agree that there is a universal knowledge that we can tap into that will guide us to the right decision.

That being said, is paying attention to your gut instinct important for real Jedi?

While we may not have the Force guiding us and telling us when to make the right moves, we do have a subconscious mind that is superb at identifying patterns and making snap decisions. Your conscious mind can only handle a limited amount of information at a time, so your subconscious quickly filters through all the sensory data that you take in and ignores what it thinks is unimportant and highlights data

that it thinks is important for your conscious mind to see. It clues you in on things through feeling. You feel positive about things that have benefited you in the past and experience negative emotions about things that have caused you physical or emotional harm. People rarely regret acting on their instinct. Regrets mainly come from decisions that are consciously made that often went against instinct. The trick here is to actually act on instinct rather than on habit. You may instinctively know that a certain risk would be beneficial and that you should go for it; but anxiety can flood your feelings with fear about what could go wrong and you don't act when you know you should.

Trust your instincts in situations where snap decisions need to be made. If you have to make a choice about something and you don't have all the information that you need to make an intellectual decision, trust your intuition because it has filtered through a lot of data and can see the patterns and knows how you really feel about the decision that needs to be made.

Your subconscious mind is mainly concerned with your safety and well-being, and living your deeply held values. It makes decisions based on what is best for you. Your conscious mind habitually concerns itself with what is best for other people. Do you become a doctor to make your parents proud of you instead of pursuing a career in that thing that you're passionate about? Do you wear the clothes that you do because you like how they fit and how they look, or do you wear them because it is what your peers expect of you or what they think is cool? Do you go against your instinct when someone gives you the creeps and you don't want to be alone with them, but you think "I don't want to be seen as a witch?"

Those are things that the intellect does, sometimes being overly concerned with what other people think of you. So it makes sense that people don't often regret their instincts when it comes to choosing things like which house to buy or rent, what college to attend, or the people you want to spend time with. Your instinct is thinking about what will benefit you the most.

Learn to trust your instincts by checking in with them throughout the day. "Stretch out with your feelings." Ask yourself what you are feeling about the decisions that you make and be mindful of the signals that your body is sending out. What is your body posture, what are you feeling in your stomach or chest, and so on. Identify what it is that your instinct is trying to tell you and then make your decision as you normally do and see how it turns out. How do things turn out when you listen to

your instincts? Do they go well? How about when you don't listen?

It may be the case that your instincts don't have enough experience with a situation to make a sound decision and you get it wrong. While you may discover that your instincts aren't always right, the process of listening and then reviewing how the situation turned out gives you more data points to build better instincts so that eventually you'll train your instinct to be right. As you continue to listen to your instinct you'll find that you'll have more and more positive experiences and will deepen your trust in it and you'll shorten the amount of time it takes to make an instinctual decision.

## Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

How much do you trust your instincts?

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Describe a time when you trusted your instinct that you now regret:

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What values do you hold so deeply that you can act instinctively on them?

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Describe a time when you trusted your instincts and had a positive result:

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## Excerpt Four

*Je'daii were mysterious beings to most of the sentients of the Settled Worlds. They went where they willed and intervened where they chose or, they claimed, as the Force directed. They had strange powers and were both respected and feared.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

How much of this quote is practical to modern Jedi? We're not mysterious beings and certainly wouldn't be recognized as Jedi to most people on Earth. We don't have the authority or even the interest to go anywhere and get involved with anything that we choose to, even if we believe that the force directs us. Can you imagine walking into someone's business saying 'I'm a Jedi!' and expecting them to comply with your requests?

We don't have strange powers and, especially if we claim strange powers, we won't be respected or feared. Declare yourself a Jedi to most people and they'll probably think you more a nut case than someone to be feared and respected.

None of this description given in the short story is true of modern Jedi, so what place does it have in our philosophy?

The fictional Je'daii and Jedi could be mysterious beings because they had strange powers. With their supernatural ability, they could get away with showing up at a location and expecting people to comply with their requests. If you didn't comply, they had the power to force the situation if they chose to do so, but had built a reputation as being a force for good.

In the real world, being mysterious isn't a good look. People want to deal with people and organizations that are trustworthy. Even though this is the first story in the Star Wars timeline, the Je'daii have had a thousand years to establish their identity in the area surrounding Tython. Modern Jedi have been around for about 25 years and are mainly associated with a joke census response rather than being a legitimate philosophical movement. Being mysterious isn't going to help establish legitimacy of any kind.

If you want to be respected, be open and honest with people. Attempting to hide yourself behind a cloak of mystery is just going to backfire. Eventually the cloak will slip and everyone will see you for who you are and any good will and trust that you've garnered will be damaged and that will impact how well you're able to serve other Jedi and your community.

The Jedi Community doesn't contain any special knowledge that needs to be hidden or otherwise protected to warrant being mysterious. In fact the only reason to be mysterious is to cover up deficiencies in character; pretending to be something that you're not or saying that you have knowledge that you don't. That is certainly not the Jedi way as it is only self serving.

Finally; Jedi don't need to be poking their nose into other people's business. We don't have the authority or even the qualifications to conduct investigations and otherwise get involved. If there are Jedi that do, then they have that authority and training through a different organization and so all the investigations need to be conducted in accordance with the philosophy and procedure of the authorizing body.

"Conquer curiosity" is a Jedi tenet. That doesn't mean that Jedi shouldn't be curious. The tenet isn't "Destroy curiosity." Conquer is used because it indicates the ability to overcome something. A Jedi must be curious because curiosity is a necessary part of developing yourself through knowledge and training. What needs to be conquered is the inordinate amount of curiosity that we sometimes feel -- the desire to poke our noses into other people's business. Meddling is a good way to destroy people's trust and good will. The only time that you should investigate or otherwise poke your nose into business is when it is your business.

There have been instances of people lying and manipulating the community in order to seek power for their own end. That is your business because it erodes people's trust and confidence in us all. When something is done maliciously, it needs to be called out so that people can make their own informed decisions.

However, once it's been called out, understand that you can not control what decisions people make after they've been informed. People will ignore the evidence or they'll just not care and will carry on as they always have. Continuing to harp about it isn't going to change minds. They've made their choice and you have to accept their right to do so.

In my opinion, most of this particular quote doesn't add anything of value to the Modern Jedi. Unless the Jedi can grow to a point where they have the expertise and authority to act in the manner of the Je'daii or Jedi, it's best to just discard this one as impractical and not beneficial.

## **Your Analysis**

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

Should a Jedi seek to be mysterious? Why or why not?

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What types of situations are you qualified to intervene in, as a Jedi?

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What supernatural abilities should Jedi seek to cultivate?

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Have you ever had to make a choice about whether to intervene in a situation or not? If so, what did you choose and why?

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[illegible]

## Excerpt Five

*They had strange powers and were both respected and feared.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

Jedi don't have supernatural powers. That is my personal belief. I think that people's attempts to claim that they have force powers are either malicious and based on a need to claim power and influence that they don't have a right to, or they are naive and spending their time attempting to develop skills that have little or no practical use; that it's improper stewardship of their time and energy. However, the Jedi that are interested in a supernatural definition of the Force have heard that argument over and over again. They've made their choice and they have a right to use their time as they best see fit.

For those that are new to Jediism or haven't made up their mind yet -- There have been members of the community that have been studying telekinetic or telepathic powers as well as other powers for decades. After pouring so much energy into what they are doing, why can't they get the skill to work on a more consistent and obvious basis? If, after so much time, their results are so spotty that they aren't trusted by most -- is it a good use of your time? What other skills can you fully master in that amount of time that can improve your life and the lives of those around you? I would encourage you to be a good steward of your time and focus on things that you can be assured will allow you to serve the communities that you belong to.

But that is my opinion. I do support Jedi's freedom to pursue those things if they wish. Afterall, discovery will only be made if people are willing to be curious and explore.

The Je'daii were both feared and respected. Most of that had to do with their strange powers; it gave them a supernatural edge over non-force wielding citizens of the galaxy. However, both the Je'daii and Jedi were highly trained, elite warriors and scholars. That level of training earned them fear and respect.

There is a place for fear as a force for good. The legal system is built on fear as a force for good. Obey the law or you will be punished. You're fined, confined, or

killed for breaking the law. It is a system of fear that is used to try to keep people in line. Police officers and a nation's military can use fear as a force for good. If they are well trained, their presence can serve as a deterrent against bad actors.

Can fear be a force for good for the modern Jedi? I can't think of any good examples. It's much the same as their ability to intervene in situations. Fear is pretty much only a tool to discourage bad actors. That's not the mission of a real Jedi. If a real Jedi is in a position to use fear as a force for good, then it is probably because they are in law enforcement or the military and so the fear is associated with that and not because of their association with Jediism. I, for one, am glad of that. I don't want people to fear me. Being feared is not something to aspire to.

Respect, on the other hand, is. Right now Jediists don't get a whole lot of respect. People in general are apathetic or have a little disdain for a group of people who are silly enough to try to turn a work of fiction into a philosophy or religion. Even people who have been involved in the Jediist community don't have much respect for it as a whole because of the scandals, infighting and general toxic behavior that is seen.

The modern Jedi have a long way to go to live up to the connotation that the word Jedi should bring. Look at the business world and you'll see 'Jedi' used in descriptions to indicate a high level of skill and knowledge. "Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training." It is and should be part of the philosophy for the Jediist to aspire to a high level of competency in all that they do. This tenet indicates that the improvement should be an ongoing pursuit. There is no statement that says 'once the Jedi reach a certain level of skill, they can stop trying to improve themselves.' But I believe the philosophy encourages Jediists to embrace the idea and try to develop such a high level of skill that they gain respect for their hard work, expertise in their craft, and their commitment to Jedi ideals.

Out of the three descriptors of the Je'daii, only one is something that modern Jedi should aspire to. Over all, I believe that the quote does a good job at provoking thought, but it doesn't serve as a solid philosophical ideal to pursue.

## **Your Analysis**

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

How much time do you spend on developing supernatural powers? Have you had enough success to use those powers in a consistent and practical manner?

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In what ways can a Jedi use fear as a tool for the Light? Are those methods practical for your life?

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What should real Jedi seek to be respected for?

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What knowledge or skill are you pursuing that will eventually gain you respect for your level of expertise? Why did you choose that area of expertise?

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## Excerpt Six

*The Ranger brought his sword out of its sheath without a whisper, holding it in his right hand as he let the balance within him slip into the dark side. Hawk knew the dark side well; he dwelled too deeply in it once and it got him sent to Bogan, a moon of Tython where those who drifted too far to the dark side were sent by the Je'daii Council for solitary reflection and meditation until they returned to the balance. Right now he needed to use aggression, however, which meant channeling the dark side.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

The main question that I feel needs to be answered when I analyze this quote is “What is the dark side?”

Truth be told, I can't answer that for the modern Jedi. By its nature, the Jedi Philosophy allows the Jedi to apply their own understanding of the metaphysical world. My definition will differ from other Jedi. What we know is that the Force is a fictional construct. It does not exist in the same manner on Earth. Instead, the Force is a symbolic term to represent whatever spirituality the individual Jedi wishes to inject. It's a placeholder, used to state that a Jedi believes that all things are connected; whether that be a literal energetic connection like Ki, Prana, or Spirit, or just a belief that everything is connected through a causal relationship ... the butterfly effect idea. So how the individual defines the Force will determine how they define, or even if they agree, that Light and Dark sides exist.

However, there are some fairly general rules of thumb that we can apply. The Light represents selflessness, peace, harmony, growth, and life. The Dark represents enmity, selfishness, chaos, and death. So, things of the Light are generally things that promote growth and light. The things of the Dark are things that lead to enmity, destruction and death. I would say that is a very general rule and not absolute, because there will be exceptions to the rule.

A lot of people talk about emotions as being Light or Dark. Light or Good emotions are generally said to be love, peace, and happiness while Dark or Negative emotions are hate, anger, fear, and doubt.

Is this true though? Is love, peace and happiness always Light and Good? Is hate, anger, and fear always Dark and Evil? I think that if you look, you'll find situations where those emotions that we generally label 'good' can be inappropriate and those emotions that we generally label 'bad' can be appropriate.

Is aggression of the Dark side? If I were in Hawk's place, would I be drawing on the Dark side if I used my aggression to rescue someone against violent criminals? How about if I'm playing a game and aggressively move to key positions in order to control the board or field of play?

Human beings are far too complex to label an emotion as Light or Dark. Whether a thing is Light or Dark depends on the whole. What is the intention? What are the actions used to try to bring the intention to fruition? What is the outcome of that attempt? All of those combined determine how much something is Light or Dark.

Fact is, when we set our intention to do something, we are rarely limited to just one emotion or behavior. I can love innocent lives and be angry that violent criminals are putting that life at risk. I can move aggressively against the criminal while also behaving protectively toward the innocent.

In the end, I don't believe that this excerpt adds anything of value to the modern Jedi Philosophy. It provides too simplistic a look at a complex issue. It may work for fiction; to label aggression as 'Dark Side', but not so much for the real world.

## Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

Describe the Light Side as you understand it:

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Describe the Dark Side as you understand it:

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Do you believe that aggression is a dark side behavior?

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Are emotions, themselves, intrinsically light or dark?

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## Excerpt Seven

*Hawk preferred not to kill when he had the option, but there was no time and no other choice.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

A core premise of the Jedi Philosophy is that life is precious. The Skywalker Code teaches “Jedi respect all life, in any form.” The Jedi Rules of Behavior teaches “...ending life strengthens the dark side” though it goes on to say that “if the act was justified -- if it saved others’ lives, or if the Jedi was acting on the will of the force -- then the light side was equally strengthened.”

Notice the distinction made there. “Then the light side was equally strengthened.” The act of ending a life didn’t suddenly switch from being dark side to being light side; ending life is and will always strengthen the dark side, but if done in defense of another life, the act also strengthens the light side. Ending another person’s life will always be wrong, but allowing an innocent person to be killed would be an even greater wrong.

Is all this talking about killing really applicable to my daily life? For the Jedi who serve in the military or in law enforcement, maybe it is. Most of us don’t, though. Hopefully, few of us will have to make the decision to end a life in order to protect another. So, endless philosophizing and thought experiments about when it’s right to kill someone is of little benefit to the average Jedi.

The Skywalker Code teaches “Jedi respect all life, in any form.” From a fictional perspective; this was probably meant to indicate that the life of a Human shouldn’t be valued more or less than the life of a Wookiee or Cerulean or Twi’lek. It doesn’t matter if an intelligent species takes a reptilian, insectoid or humanoid form; it is still life and still deserves our respect. That absolutely speaks volumes about racism; but this quote from Eruption is about killing, not respect, so I’ll leave that discussion for another time. But, if the form that life takes doesn’t matter, then does eating meat strengthen the dark side?

It’s a legitimate question that a Jediist needs to consider. If you are willing to adopt the belief that all life is precious and that ending life strengthens the dark side,

does ending the life of a cow, chicken, or pig strengthen the dark side? Or, are these principles only applicable to intelligent life?

Some Jedi choose to be vegetarian. I don't know if it's fueled by the belief that ending life strengthens the dark side or if they just use that teaching to reinforce beliefs that they've picked up elsewhere, but it's still a valid point to consider.

From my perspective; lettuce is just as alive as the rabbit that eats it, which is just as alive as the hawk eats it. Human beings need food in order to live, so eating a cow, lettuce, chicken or garlic saves the human being's life.

This excerpt shows the Jedi (or Je'daii) principle 'life is precious' in action. Hawk would prefer not to kill, but sometimes there is no choice. While we will probably and hopefully never be in a situation where we have to make that kind of choice, it does demonstrate a need to be mindful of the preciousness of life in all that we do. We must choose to treat life with respect and not be too quick to kill.

Do you immediately kill the spider, beetle, moth or wasp that invades your home, or do you make an effort to capture it and release it outside? Do you use pesticides that kill insects indiscriminately in your garden or on your farm? Do you use poison to deal with a mouse infestation and potentially create collateral deaths in the cat, hawk or fox that may eat the poisoned mouse?

It isn't wrong to kill these pests in the defense of our crops or for the sake of the health of our family; but we must do so mindfully with consideration for the wider impact of our action.

I believe that this excerpt is valuable in that it provides a reminder that we should carefully consider how we treat all life, if we truly believe that all life is precious.

## Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

Using your own understanding of the Force, how does ending life strengthen the dark side?

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Is killing a life to save another person's life ethical?

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Is it ethical to eat meat, or should all Jedi be vegetarians?

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How do you demonstrate, in your daily life, that all life is precious?

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## Your Thoughts

[illegible]

## Excerpt Eight

*That fear, that superstition, sometimes served the Je'daii almost as well as the Force did.*

- Eruption, John Ostrander

As a whole, real Jedi aren't feared and shouldn't seek to be feared. We've not been around long enough to develop legends and superstitions. However, the value that I can draw from this statement is that Jedi must be mindful of how they are perceived, both as a body and individually.

"Great, just what we need, another bunch of WEIRDOS."

"I have to say, I went into this as a skeptic, thinking it was silly and expecting to see a bunch of weirdos and socially awkward people and I was actually blown away by how real some of these people were."

"I've never heard of this in real life until now. The closest thing I've heard is people adding "Jedi" to the "other" religion options in a census survey."

"The belief deserves as much respect as the Christian faiths, and as others around the world! If you cannot respect it, you're not a real religious person, but a rule follower, dictator fundamentalist! All that matters is if that faith turns people into better versions of themselves. Everything else is just makeup that doesn't make any difference!"

"People are far too into their entertainment nowadays."

"It's a shame they are even associated with the term Jedi. These people all have mental issues and are using this as a cover."

"This is sad ... I just hope this isn't real and is just a joke."

"You know, at first I laughed at this. I thought, "Ha, people actually think Jedi can be their religion? That's crazy Talk!" But the more I look into it... it's starting to

make sense? Honestly, it seems like it promotes good morals and ethics, and there's nothing wrong with it."

"Honestly, it's as real as any other religion to me, and if people are enjoying themselves, then why not, eh?"

"Is this for real? Does this mean George Lucas is their god?"

"In other words, Jediism is a cheap Buddhist knock off."

"Dude, my face is stuck in cringe."

"I love devotion to a hobby and a passion, but man some people are a bit ... different."

"As much as the idea of believing in the Jedi order is cool and intriguing, the faking having the Force ruins it. Like, sure, if you're not a force user you can still believe and live under the Jedi doctrine?"

"I'm a huge star wars fan and this shit made me cringe my brain out."

"I'm happy for them, they have found something that makes them truly happy and moves them forward in life."

"I think this is great. It is a belief that includes all religions. So you can be a Catholic and Jedi? Which I think is so cool. Many religions under one roof. What a diverse world this has become."

"When life gets tough, and you're feeling depressed, just think about the fact that there are ACTUALLY people out there like this."

I did my best to be fair about selecting the quotes. I chose comments from youtube videos about Jediism that weren't from Jediist channels. I figured that videos created by Jedi about Jediism would be viewed mainly by other Jediist and wouldn't provide a true representation of people's views. I didn't add obvious jokes; like 'we should create a sith religion and order 66 them.' or 'Where can I get a real lightsaber?' A lot of the comments were about how Jediism appears to be

Buddhism or Taoism in space and there were plenty of comments on how out of shape the Jediists featured in the videos were.

From the comments you get the idea that people are pretty neutral. It's a novelty, a minor point of interest. The respect that is shown isn't very deep. It's a surface level 'They aren't bothering me, so I'm not going to bother them.'

I believe that the manner in which Jediism is being introduced to the world plays a very large role. When it's brought up because of its novelty or in discussions about whether it really can be defined as a true religion or philosophy, the reaction is going to be in kind. The Jedi need to move away trying to gain validation by talking about why Jediism should be valid and shift to just being Jedi. Don't tell the world about Jediism; show it in action. Demonstrate to the people around you that it has a positive impact on your life. Demonstrate it to your neighborhood and community through compassionate service.

## **Your Analysis**

How is it applicable?

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How is it practical?

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How is it beneficial?

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How is it positive?

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## Learning Prompts

How do you believe the public views Jediism? Are these comments an accurate cross section?

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How important do you believe that it is that Jediism is seen as a legitimate religion or philosophy?

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How do you think Jediism should eventually be perceived by the public?

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What do you, and other Jedi, have to do to cultivate that perception?

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